country. Besides, frontline demonstrations of coarse cereals are also organized by the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)/State Agriculture Universities on farmer's field to popularize the frontier technologies among farmers. Under this scheme, assistance is given to the farmers for distribution of seed minikits, distribution of certified seeds, micronutrients, gypsum, as well as transfer of technology through field demonstrations and training of farmers in farmer field schools.

The Government of India announces Minimum Support Price (MSP) every year for jowar, bajra and ragi. MSP has been increased for jowar and bajra from Rs.540/- per quintal in 2007-08 to Rs.840/- per quintal in 2009-10 and Rs.600/- per quintal in 2007-08 to Rs.915/- per quintal in 2009-10 for ragi, respectively.

The Department of Food and Public Distribution makes allocation of coarse grains under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) as per the requests of the States/UTs for the same for Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), Below Poverty Line (BPL) and Above Poverty Line (APL) categories. The coarse grains are allocated for AAY and BPL categories by submitting equal quantities of rice and/or wheat as requested by the States/UTs since allocation of food grains (rice and wheat) is already being made to these categories as per their entitlement *i.e.* @35 kgs. per family per month. However, for APL category, coarse grains are allocated based on requests received from State Governments in addition to their existing allocation of food grains where there is margin between the present allocation and the entitled maximum quantity of 35 kgs. per APL family per month.

Research and development in farming sector

1705. SHRI A. ELAVARASAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware that the agriculture production is declining during recent years;

(b) if so, whether Government has taken any initiatives to promote research and development in the field of agriculture since there is threat for food security; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) to (c) No, Sir. The production of rice, wheat, cereals and total foodgrains in the country has steadily increased during the last five years *i.e.*, 2004-05 to 2008-09 (4th advance estimates).

Government has taken several initiatives to promote research and development and adoption of improved technologies in the field of agriculture. Some of the major initiatives include enhancing crop productivity through development of superior varieties having high disease resistance, high yield and responding well for precision farming practices, evolving appropriate crop management practices and formulating efficient crop based cropping systems for sustainable food production,

intensification of research on development of commercially viable hybrid technology for achieving higher yield, development of molecular techniques and their application in crop breeding with emphasis on genetic engineering etc.

Fall in soil nutrition in Assam

1706. SHRI KUMAR DEEPAK DAS: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government is aware of the fact that there has been an inordinate fall in soil nutrition factors in Assam;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action-plan of Government towards controlling the use of urea and banning the use of other pesticides to ensure food safety and nutrition security in the State of Assam?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (PROF. K.V. THOMAS): (a) and (b) An increasing trend of depletion of nutrients has been reported in soil in Assam as brought out below:-

Nutrient	Negative balance (in metric tonnes) in 1998-99	Negative balance (in metric tonnes) in 2005-06
N	1,35,257	2,14,763
P2O5	65,876	59,967
K2O	1,67,650	2,35,576

(c) The Government has taken steps to reduce the imbalance in use of chemical fertilizers including urea as well as to reduce use of pesticides in the State of Assam keeping in view the food safety and nutrition security. Emphasis is given on balanced use of chemical fertilizers, Integrated Nutrient Management, organic farming and Integrated Pest Management for control of pests with judicious use of pesticides.

Hike in prices of corn

1707. SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether corn prices are rising;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of corn exported to each country during the last three years; and

(d) the role of Andhra Pradesh farmers producing corn in this regard?